



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, December 19, 2023

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Federal Court in Alabama Finds Lawsuit Challenging Racial Gerrymandering in Jefferson County Should Proceed Quickly to Trial

Today, a federal court for the Northern District of Alabama denied a motion to dismiss and ruled that a lawsuit filed by the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) challenging the Jefferson County Commission's 2021 redistricting plan as a racial gerrymander should proceed as quickly as possible. While the Court also denied plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction to hold special elections in 2024 under a new and nondiscriminatory plan, the judge intends to move the case quickly to trial before the regularly scheduled 2026 elections. The lawsuit was filed in April by LDF and Wiggins, Childs, Pantazis, Fisher & Goldfarb on behalf of Cara McClure, Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM), and the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP.

"The plaintiffs brought this action because the Commission's redistricting plan unfairly packs Black voters into districts based on race," said Brenda Wright, LDF Special Litigation & Policy Counsel. "We are glad that the Court has recognized the seriousness of our allegations and has rejected the Commission's effort to have the case thrown out of court. And although the Court did not grant our clients immediate relief, we are pleased that the Court has decided to expedite the trial of this case to ensure that a lawful redistricting plan will be in place well before the 2026 elections."

"The Court's decision today, to swiftly move forward with our case and reject attempts to block our access to justice, fills me with hope. It is crucial that the voices of every member of our community are not only heard but also genuinely reflected in Jefferson County's redistricting. We deserve to be accurately represented, and it's time our voices play a role in shaping the process," said plaintiff, activist and dedicated voter Cara McClure.

The plaintiffs allege that the Commission violated the 14th Amendment of the Constitution by unnecessarily packing Black voters into two super majority-Black commission districts (with over 75% Black populations) and moving Black voters out of other Commission Districts to prevent Black voters from having influence over the elections in the remaining three districts.

"We are encouraged by today's decision by the Court to expedite the trial before the 2026 elections," said Alabama NAACP President Benard Simelton. "For too long, the Jefferson County

Commission has chosen to deny Black voters fair representation, and in the process, denied our communities the resources they need to adequately address their needs. Today’s decision brings Jefferson County one step closer to putting in place a redistricting map that treats Black voters fairly.”

“As an organization that puts community and compassion at the forefront, GBM has a steadfast commitment to fight for fair representation in our Commission redistricting plans,” said GBM Executive Director Scott Douglas. “We welcome today’s decision by the Court to expedite trial to ensure we can vote under a fair map before the 2026 Commission elections. We look forward to continuing to engage in this process to support making the redistricting process of Jefferson County one that is indicative of the vibrant, diverse community in which comprises it.”

The lawsuit cites Jefferson County’s long and well-documented history of diluting Black political power, as well as the Commission’s mere monthlong redistricting process to redraw its lines. During this truncated process, the Commission held only one public hearing to invite concerns from constituents, community leaders, and voting rights advocates, and failed to consider any map that did not crack Black communities of interest to needlessly pack Black people into Commission Districts 1 and 2, and strip them from Districts 3, 4, and 5.

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.